South Eastern Europe to Central Asia: political transition and environmental risks

Reconstructing South Eastern Europe

Limited rule of law:
Political systems being rebuilt. Limited regulation and enforcement capacity. Dramatic collapse of economic activities. Informal and illicit markets dominate economy. Rapid impoverishment of population and degradation of environment.

Governance in transition:
Re-emergence of rule of law and restoration of formal economy, limited by dependence on obsolete infrastructure and industrial capacity.

Legacy of war:
Countries having experienced armed conflict between 1991 and 2001. Widespread destruction of infrastructure. Unexploded ordinance and landmines render large areas unsafe for development. Hundreds of thousands still displaced.

Nuclear legacies

Nuclear power station (NPS)

Nuclear powerplant closed or under construction

Nuclear industry and research site (civil and military). Fuel production or recycling

Radioactive waste site associated with uranium mines (active or closed) and other hazardous waste storage ponds

Nuclear weapons test site. Large areas contaminated with radioactive fallout

Areas contaminated by radioactive fallout (nuclear accidents or mismanagement of radioactive waste).

Russian regions specialized in civil and military nuclear industries. Relationship with Central Asian nuclear facilities.

Soviet legacy management

Aral Sea and Surrounding Region

Diversion of rivers feeding the Aral Sea led to exposure of seabed to open air, allowing airborne transport of salts and heavy metals in a perimeter of 600 - 800 km. Desertification and salinization of arable land, resulting in the collapse of fisheries and agriculture, impoverishment, and outward migration.

Ferghana Valley

Highly populated, ethnically diverse region with severely degraded forests and soils, limited rule of law, and widespread traffic in contraband merchandise. Lack of energy sources and supply. Region under the threat of collapse of the Kyrgyz radioactive tailing ponds

Water-related tensions:

Conflicts over distribution of water between upstream and downstream countries. High economic dependence on irrigated agriculture (rice and cotton), with steadily deteriorating soils.

Kyrgyzstan and South Kazakhstan mines

Presence of poorly-maintained radioactive waste sites in seismically active zone, located nearby to highly populated areas and important surface water

North-East Kazakhstan: Tselinyy-Pavlodar-Semei-Oksemen and Aktau on the Caspian Sea coast

Area contaminated with radioactive fallout from experimental nuclear explosions and inadequate waste storage. High mortality rate compared to Central Asian average.